

Story 973 (1961, Dictated)

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The Shoemaker and the Snake

Once there was a shoemaker. As he was walking along the street one day, he saw a man striking a snake, trying to kill it. The shoemaker said to this man, "I shall give you five kuruş¹ if you will let that snake go its way without further harm." The man agreed to this, and the shoemaker gave him the five kuruş. In this way the shoemaker saved the life of the snake.

Years passed. Then one day the padişah ordered a pair of shoes made by this same shoemaker. He gave the measurements and the description for the shoes he wished, and he said to the shoemaker, "If you do not make my shoes exactly as I want them, I shall have you strangled by the snake which is my executioner."

¹A kuruş is 1/100 of a lira. It was once a negotiable coin, and it remained so into the 1960s. When the lira was devalued in the 1970s and 1980s--700-800 liras to the U.S. dollar in the late 1980s--the kuruş became meaningless and functionless.

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Try as hard as he could, the poor shoemaker simply could not please the padişah. As a result, the padişah decided to carry out his threat, and he ordered his snake to strangle the shoemaker. When the executioner saw the man, he refused to touch him, for this was the same snake that had been saved by the shoemaker many years earlier

In this way a kind deed was rewarded. A kind deed is never forgotten.